

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held at St Mary's Church, The Street, Frittenden on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022 at 8.00pm, pursuant to notice.

Present: In the Chair Councillor Anthony Staples, Chairman of the Parish Council, four Parish Councillors, 12 speakers and 16 members of the public including those from Village organisations.

In attendance: The Parish Clerk

Councillor Staples welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Rosalind Riley, Councillor Sarah Murray, Borough Councillor Andrew Fairweather, Mr P Betts and Mrs S Davies.

#### **2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ASSEMBLY**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021 were made available to read prior to the meeting. Acceptance of those minutes was proposed by Councillor Tuke, seconded by Councillor Vernon, and agreed.

#### **3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES**

None

#### **4. TO RECEIVE ACCOUNTS OF CHARITIES**

The accounts of the Idenden Charity were made available for inspection.

#### **5. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

##### **The Council**

Since last year's Annual Parish Assembly (APA) we have held 10 monthly Council meetings, and 1 additional planning meeting. Attendance by Councillors averaged 91%. Attendance by the public varied from 0 to 7. Councillors Fairweather (Borough) and Holden (County) regularly attend our meetings and PCSOs Humphreys and Underdown have also attended. Meetings were held by Zoom while this was still legally permitted. In June we were unable to hold a meeting in a manner which would comply with social distancing requirements and as local government legislation prevented our meeting on Zoom we held no meeting in June. Meetings in the Memorial Hall (or in church while the Hall was being renovated) resumed last September.

On 24th March 2019 the Council delegated powers to the Clerk acting in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to allow the Council to function effectively during lockdown. These were revoked on 20th July 2021 following the removal of lockdown restrictions. All Council decisions are now made in open meeting as was the case before lockdown. (The Hardship Fund subcommittee continued to meet via Zoom until it was wound up but its recommendations were always presented to the full council in open meeting.)

I have summarised our activities below. These are arranged alphabetically rather than in any order of importance. Although all Councillors are collectively responsible for each of these activities, I have noted the names of Councillors who take the lead in particular areas.

##### **Affordable Housing/ Community Land Trust (CLT)**

The Parish Council and Frittenden CLT have been actively engaged with TWBC, our borough councillor and the developer of Four Acres in an attempt to achieve affordable housing in this parish. Discussions are continuing.

**Amenities** (Lead Councillor Heather Cullingworth)

The playing field and children's playground are regularly inspected. Cllr Cullingworth is supported by Cllrs Gosbee and Murray in this work. Reports of these routine inspections are presented to the Council and minuted. Remedial action is taken whenever appropriate. ROSPA carry out a full annual inspection and their recommendations are implemented.

The fence adjoining the parking area behind Bakery Close has now been replaced.

The hedge bordering Laundry Lane has now been reduced in height and the wording of new hedge contracts should ensure that hedge maintenance problems should not recur.

**Amenity Vehicle**

Visits by the Civic Amenity Vehicle (the Saturday rubbish lorry) remain suspended due to lack of driver capacity.

**Community Shop** (Lead Councillors Lester Gosbee and Rosalind Riley)

The Parish Council continues to support the idea of a Community Shop and has provided financial assistance. Cllr Vernon has also provided advice.

**Consultations**

Wherever relevant the Parish Council contributes to public consultations. This year two were particularly relevant.

Ward boundaries

Ward boundaries in the borough have come up for routine review by the Electoral Reform Commission. Since the previous review the distribution of population has changed, council responsibilities have changed, and Tunbridge Wells has a low elector-to-ward member-ratio. In addition, TWBC is unusual in having a mixture of single and multi-member wards.

We indicated a strong preference for retaining the present system as a single member ward comprising Frittenden and Sissinghurst. This arrangement serves the two communities well with one clearly-identifiable councillor representing our interests. However, it appears that the borough council will be reduced to 13 three-member wards and we will become a small adjunct to a much larger entity, almost certainly linked to Cranbrook. We should hear the final decision by the end of this year.

This likely change will not affect our parish boundary, nor our electoral constituency as these issues are considered quite separately.

Local Buses

The possible withdrawal of the subsidy for the Kent Karrier (dial-a-ride) service is of concern to residents who depend on it for access to essential services. We have set out our reasons for opposing any cut to this service as Frittenden has no public transport in the village centre. We await the outcome of this consultation.

**Dog fouling**

This continues to be a source of annoyance to residents. It is also a health hazard, especially to young children. The Council will be providing signage making this danger clear.

Two dispensers of bags for dog's mess – at the entrance to the field and by the War Memorial – are regularly replenished by the council but unfortunately this facility is abused by some residents.

**Finance**

Once again, the precept for the coming year remains unchanged at £17,000. Frittenden continues to have the lowest precept and the lowest rate of precept in the Borough.

Our accounts for the year to 31st March 2022 will be available on the Parish Council website once they have been audited.

### **Hardship Fund** (Lead Councillor Anthony Staples)

When the lockdown arrangements came into force two years ago it was clear that there could be people in financial difficulty who would not be covered by Government support schemes. Over the life of the Fund, we disbursed £16,810 in 37 grants to 11 parishioners. The Fund was only ever intended as a temporary solution to specific problems arising from Covid restrictions and was formally wound up on 19th April 2022. Remaining funds (£4,269) are being distributed according to donors' wishes.

As a result of operating this fund we were aware of pockets of hardship in the village and saw a need for some continued provision that would be flexible, confidential, responsive and unbureaucratic. The present cost-of-living crisis will only make this need greater. At their final meeting the Hardship Fund sub-committee considered how these needs could be met. The Trustees of the Idenden Charity have offered to take responsibility for such a fund in future and will be outlining their proposals shortly. The Parish Council is grateful for their offer and fully supports the principle of a fund supported by public subscription to meet the needs of Frittenden residents, run as a separate fund under the Idenden umbrella.

### **Headcorn Aerodrome** (Lead Councillors Lester Gosbee and James Tuke)

The question of aircraft noise nuisance was raised but was of considerably less concern to residents than in the previous year. In the event of specific noise nuisance, the route is to contact the aerodrome, or if there is a more general concern contact the local planning authority (Maidstone Borough Council). Parish councils have no control over issues of noise but will pass on residents' concerns through the Headcorn Aerodrome Advisory Committee.

### **High Weald Academy**

In September last year it became apparent that the High Weald Academy was to be closed at the end of the present academic year. This was of considerable concern to local residents given the absence of alternative non-selective education in the area. As a council we made representations to our MP and supported the initiatives of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council but for now it seems that this cause is lost. In the longer term we would strongly support the return of good quality non-selective education in the Cranbrook area.

### **Parking**

Parking in the village continues to be a problem, particularly at the bend in Biddenden Road. Residents are encouraged to park on their own land wherever possible and if this is not possible to use the wide verge beyond the entrance to The Orchards. A number are now doing this. Parking on the bend is very dangerous and could lead to an accident.

The other problem area is in The Street, especially at school collection and drop off times as the Memorial Hall car park is unavailable. Hopefully this difficulty should be resolved when work on the Hall is complete.

### **Planning** (Lead Councillor Richard Vernon)

The parish council has no planning powers but it is a statutory consultee whose views are taken into account by the borough council. We therefore carefully consider all planning applications, taking into account any representations made by residents.

During the year the Council considered 41 planning applications, including:

- 10 home extensions
- 4 changes of use
- 2 mobile home applications (under provision for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation)
- 1 major development (23 houses at Four Acres, Cranbrook Road)
- 1 new build application (in place of the permitted barn conversion)

- 23 other matters (e.g., amendments to, or clarification of, earlier applications, tree preservation issues, etc.),

The majority of applications within the parish were uncontroversial, but the two mobile home applications were on sites subject to enforcement orders and we have given clear and detailed reasons for our objections to the two new applications. We are grateful to TWBC for taking prompt enforcement action. Both applications have been refused planning permission; one applicant has appealed. While this appeal is in progress no further enforcement action can be taken on that site.

The other sensitive issue is the development at Four Acres. Our particular concern is to ensure that there is adequate provision for local affordable housing made available to local people

### **Roads and verges** (Lead Councillor Lester Gosbee)

Despite numerous (often badly co-ordinated) closures for resurfacing and maintenance work road surfaces in the village, like those throughout the county, are still in poor shape.

We were particularly dissatisfied with the resurfacing in The Street in 2021 and felt that KCC seemed reluctant to accept responsibility for the shortcomings of their contractors.

We will continue to press for proper maintenance of our roads but are aware that KCC is heavily constrained financially.

Fly-tipping continues to be a problem and we urge residents to report instances immediately, preferably via the "Report it" facility on the TWBC website. If action is not taken promptly report it to a councillor and we will take up the issue on your behalf.

Damaged and stolen salt bins have now been replaced.

We are grateful to Cllr Gosbee for his regular inspection of verges, road surfaces, and salt bins and following up problems and for the support given for urgent local problems by Paul Catt (KCC Highway Steward for Tunbridge Wells).

### **Speedwatch** (Lead Councillor Anthony Staples)

We continue to carry out speed checks in two-week blocks each month. We aim to hold five or six sessions each time but due to weather and availability of team members we have not quite achieved this. Our 10 active members carried out 52 sessions over the year, recorded 255 offenders and as a result 39 police letters have been sent out. In addition, some cases of untaxed vehicles have come to the attention of the police.

The principal benefit of Speedwatch is to raise awareness of road safety and speeding in particular. More volunteers are always welcome, especially as some of our stalwart speed-watchers have been affected by illness. Typical commitment is two hours in each four-week period. Some initial training is needed but this is done online. Do contact me if you would like to join our volunteers

### **The Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

On 10th January the council called an open meeting to consider ideas for recognising the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Many useful suggestions were made. A committee including representatives of the council and other village organisations has devised a programme of events over the long weekend (2nd-5th June) and throughout June. Thanks to the efforts of Mike Fitzgerald and Cllr Riley generous funding has been obtained. There should be a lasting legacy to the village in the form of equipment for the Memorial Hall, obtained as a result of this grant.

(See the summary of the main events over the weekend, and check in the May Parish Magazine or Facebook for details of the Applause events later in June.)

Frittenden has already taken part in the Queen's Green Canopy project: six trees were planted in the corner of the Cricket Field, funded by Frittenden Parish Council and TWBC. Later in the year

landowners are encouraged to plant oak trees in the hedgerows around their fields. Full details are available in the Parish magazine

### **The TWBC Local Plan** (Lead Councillor Richard Vernon)

The Local Plan was out for further consultation during the year. Our only remaining concern was to ensure that any developer contributions were routed in ways that we felt would be of greatest benefit locally. We have made appropriate representations. The Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 1st November 2021 and last month was cleared for Stage 2. It is expected that the plan will be adopted in January 2023.

### **Village Clean-up Days** (Lead Councillor Heather Cullingworth)

We have held three Village Clean-Up Days, on Saturdays 22nd May and 23rd September 2021 and 26th March 2022. We now have our own equipment but continue to use TWBC for the removal of the rubbish we collect. At these collections the majority of waste arises from casual disposal of food and drink containers which is an increasing problem especially along Cranbrook and Headcorn Roads. We are very grateful to the volunteers who help at these sessions but could always do with more.

We would like to thank Sean and Rosie Croucher for providing us with a headquarters, Ivor and Carol Jauncey for the use of their field, and Dick Munton for his truck and the many parishioners who pick up litter in their own areas throughout the year. Litter-picking equipment is now available for use by parishioners (contact Tony Staples).

Finally, I'd like to thank:

- Our Parish Clerk Emma Nightingale, for her cheerful and very efficient support.
- Our Borough Councillor, Andy Fairweather, and County Councillor, Sean Holden' both of whom regularly attend our council meetings as well as being ready and willing to take forward issues on our behalf whenever needed.
- Bernard Millard, our auditor.
- Simon Humphreys, our PCSO, Ollie Underdown (who covered Frittenden for three months in Simon's absence), and Adam Osborn, our Community Warden.

Each year we are invited by KALC to nominate one or more parishioners who have contributed to our village during the year. This is an invidious task as very many people contribute to the quality of life in our community. At this meeting the award was presented to Sean and Rosie Croucher to recognise the great service they give to the Village. The pop-up shop they set up at the Bell & Jorrock's and their home delivery service proved to be a lifeline for residents during the Covid restrictions. Sean and Rosie are at the centre of village life, not just as publicans but with their contribution to the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and the general way they look out for people.

As a council we recognise and value the valuable contribution made by the many voluntary organisations in our village. So, this year we have invited representatives of a number of them to say a few words about their activities, something which we had hoped to do at last year's APA but were unable to do due to Covid restrictions.

## **6. GUEST SPEAKERS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS**

### **Bell Ringers**

Ms Rebecca Steele spoke for the Bell Ringers – Bell ringing is an activity that can be enjoyed by anyone of any age and any shape. Frittenden's young bellringers have enjoyed success with ringers from Frittenden and Benenden recently winning a competition. New members will be very welcome. Anyone interested in bellringing can look on their Facebook page or Instagram account or simply come up to the tower on a Monday evening or Sunday morning. They practise every Monday evening from 7.30pm – 9.00pm and are hoping to run a beginner's course over the Summer.

### **Community Land Trust**

Mr Stewart Hagerty spoke for the CLT – The CLT is focused on trying to secure low-cost housing for Frittenden. A site in the Village has secured planning permission for 23 houses, 9 of which will have to be affordable. The CLT's aim is to purchase and manage the letting of those 9 houses as affordable housing

for those with a connection to Frittenden. The CLT is working with the developer, Jarvis, and TWBC (with the support of Cllr Fairweather) to see if this can be achieved, but it will ultimately come down to cost and this is challenging, particularly with the recent rise in the cost of building materials. If the CLT cannot secure the affordable housing element of the developer, it will be sold to a Housing Association who will have to rent to residents assigned from TWBC's housing list.

### **CAMEO**

Mrs Isobel Mehrabian spoke on CAMEO which stands for "Come And Meet Each Other". They meet every second Wednesday of the month between 2pm and 4pm, currently at the Church but they will be back at the Memorial Hall once the renovations are completed. The PCSO and the Community Warden usually attend. CAMEO is for everyone and they have been pleased to welcome several new families who have moved into the village. Please do drop in to meet us all and enjoy a cup of tea and cake, which is very kindly supplied by the WI.

### **Idenden Charity**

Mr Sean Croucher provided a brief explanation of the long history of the Charity, which provides small financial gifts to around 20 recipients a year, usually at Christmas. It was hoped that a new fund would be set up by subscription under the management of the Charity's trustees to support residents of the Parish who found themselves suffering financial hardship, particularly in light of the cost-of-living crisis, and needed some additional assistance at any time of the year. This fund will be administered separately from the Charity. The fund is yet to launch and work is currently being done on the rules around how beneficiaries will be referred and vetted.

### **Neighbourhood Watch Scheme**

Mr Sean Croucher spoke on behalf of Mrs Rosie Croucher who could not be at the meeting. With oil prices going up residents were urged to secure their oil tanks and also mark any items kept in sheds or outbuildings. The NWS wanted to ensure that every crime was reported as that was the only way that the allocation of police resources etc could be influenced. Reports could also be logged on the WhatsApp group to alert others. Alternatively, residents could alert the NWS of issues of concern by emailing Rosie leaving a note at the pub.

### **Community Shop**

Mrs Berni Cooper spoke on the work being done to move the Community Shop project forwards. Councillor Sarah Murray had joined the committee and work was being done by Ms Emma Pinfold to improve the Facebook page and raise awareness of the project. Funding remained the main challenge. To date 96 households had pledged financial support, which amounted to around one third of households in the Village. The support of the Village was needed if the project was to be a success. Some external grants and corporate sponsorship had been received. Subject to the outcome of an ongoing grant application, it was hoped that a share offer could go ahead in September or October 2022 with the aim of launching the shop in the Spring of 2023.

### **Frittenden Cricket, Sports and Social Club**

Mr Mark [xxxx] was the representative from the Club. They play in the Third division of the Kent Village Cricket League as well as in friendly matches. Anyone is welcome. They have juniors (11+ years), seniors and very seniors, both boys and girls. The Club welcomes any new members and was looking for players, supporters, umpires and scorers. The Club organised an annual firework display which was well attended and would be hosting the Nora Bearsby Cup on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 with a BBQ and bar.

Councillor Staples noted his thanks for the Clubs support for the Queen's Canopy tree planting.

### **Frittenden Gardening Society**

Mrs Patricia [xxxxx] spoke for the Gardening Society. They have c.90 members and hold two shows a year, in the Spring and Autumn, as well as visits to local gardens and a social evening in a member's garden. The Society will be running a plant stall during the upcoming Jubilee celebrations. It is a really welcoming Society which costs £5 per person or £10 per couple to join.

### **Frittenden Historical Society**

Ms Tor Millard spoke for the Historical Society. It had had a difficult time during the Covid restrictions because it couldn't hold meetings, but they would be running a full schedule of meetings from October. Meetings would be moving to the last Tuesday of every month. In the meantime, a tour of the roof of

Rochester Cathedral had been arranged on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2022. This was open to non-members and members alike. It would be the Society's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025 and they were working on a blue plaque type scheme and walking trial around the Village to mark that milestone. They were also working on recording the burials at the Mill Lane Burial Ground for publication. The Society was also putting together an exhibition for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations and would welcome contributions to the exhibits.

Councillor Staples noted that the talks organised by the Historical Society were interesting and wide ranging.

### **Frittenden Memorial Hall**

Ms Tor Millard also represented the Hall. It was closed for renovations and final decoration but would be open for the Jubilee weekend. Thanks were given to Charlotte and Dan Hunter who organised this year's Fund Run, together with all the volunteers who helped out, which raised c.£1,036 for the Hall.

### **Frittenden WI**

Mrs Ann Holroyd spoke about the activities of Frittenden's WI branch, which will be celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. It is a very friendly group of around 25-30 members. Covid prevented them from undertaking fund raising activities but they are once again able to offer refreshments for events in the Village for a small charge.

### **Larchmere House**

Ms Becky [xxx] spoke about the many wonderful activities that residents are able to participate in and the way in which the whole Frittenden community has input into those activities, from members of the church attending to sing hymns and visits by the children of Frittenden Pre-School and Frittenden School to lunches at the Bell & Jorrocks pub. A resident was recently able to fulfil his wish of going up in an aeroplane at Headcorn Aerodrome thanks to a Frittenden resident. Grateful thanks were expressed to all those who contributed to making Larchmere a real home from home.

### **The Tent Team**

Mr Mike Cooper explained that the Tent Team's objective was to provide an affordable source of marquees and associated equipment to the people, clubs and societies of the Village and then recycle the income received from hire fees back into the Village by way of donations. As an example, donations had been made to the Sam West Foundation, the Community Shop project and the Memorial Hall. They had also recently purchased a new tent and bits of equipment for use during the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations and replace some of the more aged pieces of equipment.

The Tent Team was actively looking to recruit more volunteers to assist with putting up and striking down the tents. The time commitment needed was not particularly great given that they expected to have around 12 bookings a year. The larger the pool of volunteers that could be called upon, the lesser the time commitment needed.

If you want to borrow the Tent Team equipment, would like to join the team or are aware of a charitable cause within the village which could use a small contribution from the Tent Team funds, contact Mike.

Councillor Staples stated that the Parish Council and Frittenden community were very grateful to the Tent Team for all that they did and, in particular, to Mike Cooper for his total commitment to what he did in running the Tent Team.

### **Weald of Kent Young Farmer's Club (WKYFC)**

Councillor Staples read out a message from Mr Dan Smith, who was unable to attend.

Mr Smith thanked the Village for letting WKYFC, which previously met at Marden Sports Club, be part of the Frittenden community. To say hello to the Village members did a litter pick in October. This was part of a social action project organised by the National Federation of YFCs, where all 580 clubs in England and Wales were invited to take part. WKYFC began in November 2016 and recently celebrated its 5-year anniversary. WKYFC meets twice a month on a Thursday night for members age 12 to 28. Members come from as far afield as Kings Hill, and Sedlescombe. They also usually meet for a farm visit or activity somewhere between Hawkhurst and Coxheath.

They have got some events coming up over the next few months, one being the Kent County Show in July. This year they are planning on taking to the Show some cattle and sheep from local farms in the Weald area.

### **St Mary's Church**

Rev Pete Deaves spoke of the role of the church in the life of the Village and, in particular, the great work done by members of the church to support the community through the Covid pandemic. A new pattern of services and other activities was being trialled with the aim of providing greater integration between the church communities of Frittenden and Sissinghurst and it was wonderful to have had services attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury in November 2021. The church continued to be involved in the life of Frittenden and Sissinghurst schools and the range of activities on offer, from Little Lambs and Trinity Tots to welcoming CAMEO into St Mary's Church and hosting many other coffee mornings, events and special services, meant that it really did have something for everyone.

**7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending, and there being no further business closed the meeting at 9:45pm